

Brick Making

Demar Dudley

Tape #209

Interviewed by Marynell Snow, February 1989

Transcribed by Marilyn Hunting August 2001

DeMar Dudley (DeMar): It was already built and operating as far back as I remember. I don't know when it was started, but what they did was to move in there and scrape off and clean an area that's immediately back of the garage that houses the school bus, just immediately west of that is the area. Then they dug a pit and brought the water down from the canal, of course, that was available, and turned it into this pit. They then had to work clay out. That's hard heavy clay, that area. It was excellent material for bricks when they added enough sand of proper proportions to it.

So they mixed it up then. A great big mud puddle, that's what it was. But first I better go back and explain. They build an adobe mill, and it was like an old-fashion coffee grinder. Very much like the old-fashion hay baler with a sweep on it and a team on this sweep. They went around and on the inside of it they had a heavy pillar shaft and on it was some steel paddles that stuck out on it, four I think there were, and they would stir the mud up. They would shovel this clay down in, add water, and then add sand till they got the right texture. I don't know who was responsible for telling how much sand was supposed to be used, but at any rate, he knew what he was doing because he got the right amount and they produced some very fine brick.

The team would go around when they got this big hole full of mud, and textured up, and sand added to it to the point that they wanted for the making of adobes. Then they dug a pit for a man to stand in and the mud was squeezed out by the paddles as they passed an opening. There was a little band where the mud would squeeze out and the man standing down in the pit, he had a container which may have held three brick. The compartment—I don't know what they called it either—there was three of them, I don't know how many of those they had, but they had to have several. The team would go around and turn this sweep around and each time a paddle passed an opening in the hole in the mill it would squeeze out a big hunk of mixed clay and sand and the man standing there would take that and slop it down into this form for making adobes. I don't know what that was called. I should, it is quite important to get the right name for it. So you better ask some more questions. You surely will find somebody that knows more about it than I do. They made brick locally and they have to do it the same way essentially.

Any rate, the man standing in the pit would take the mud and slop it down into this container and when he got three of them he had to cut it off, so he would cut it off level. The cut off was a matter of sort of a bow with a wire and the wire did the cutting as he pulled it through the mud, so they were all the same size. Well, then someone took them out and they had a large area cleared and smoothed. They were turned upside down. They dumped these adobes out on the ground and left them there to dry. It was quite a sizeable yard because they kept doing that all day long. They'd wait till it was firm enough that they could dump it out without distorting the

shape of the adobes. They strew those out in a large area. After they had dried thoroughly, so they were hard enough that they would hold weight on them, they started to build them into a mound, which they called a kiln. This mound was simply a strip of adobes laid. I don't know how wide it was, but any rate, they would build it up several ridges, it may have been twenty feet. You ought to go to Salt Lake to see a kiln in operation, then you could write more intelligent about it. There is nothing of this kind in this country now.

But at any rate, they built a tier of adobes and I don't know how wide that would have been, maybe six feet, that's just a good guess, I'm sure it's wrong. They built it up until it was about five or six feet high, then they would arch it over, that was the tunnel through there out the other end. Then they would built it on up and arch it right over and build it solid until it was about the height of a room. Now remember, I was only about five or six years old so it's not going to be very accurate, it's just sort of generality. They built it up till it was about as big as a house, I'd say. I don't know how many of those fire tunnels. I know that I've seen at least three fires going at a time. But they would start a fire at one end, well, the north end of the tunnel was built over and formed into a chimney and one chimney took care of all of them, cross-ventilated, so that the chimney pulled the draft through all of the tunnels. Whether there was more than three, I can't say, but there probably were. Then they would build a fire in the south end of each of those tunnels. They had to keep those fires going. They had to have a fireman on the job, day and night, for thirty days to burn the bricks sufficiently so they would be brick instead of adobes. I think thirty days was firing time. That was quite a job to keep the roaring fire, it had to stay hot, as hot as a wood fire could made.

The community, I guess, had hauled wood and were hauling it. It took a lot of wood to keep either three or five of those tunnels. It took a lot of wood and they had to keep that going—top heat—for 24 hours a day for thirty days. At any rate, that's the way they did it. When they got it burned, then it had to have a cooling off period of at least thirty days, at least till it cooled down again so they could be handled.

After they did that, then they tore the thing down; 'course the brick at the center, that kept the hottest the longest, were the best brick. So they graded them and they took the very best brick first to build the church house and they were still good brick. The ones that Archie Richardson got were good because they were still... I haven't ever inspected it. I think you'll find they are in excellent condition. The design of the house might be poor, but the construction is excellent and it still is. Well, they got the brick out for the church house then they got some for Archie Richardson, and I don't know whether there were any others or not, but Father got brick for this brick house of his, but it was the tail end and his wasn't very good brick; and they just deteriorated until we had to tear the old house down because the brick had just crumbled away.

Are there any other brick houses?

Marynell Snow (MS): There was the old Percy Stewart house down here. Then I have the Dudley house, and where the Legion Hall is.

DeMar: Oh yes, Tom Ainge's home.

MS: Then the old Billings home, Frank Billings home. That was about it.

DeMar: I think that Frank Billings must have got some pretty good brick. Even though it burned down, the shell is still there.

MS: Demar: I haven't asked anybody. Do you know if they had carbide lights in the homes or kerosene lanterns?

DeMar: I don't know. I'm quite sure they just used kerosene lanterns. The old Aladdin lamp was just about the best light you could get and it's as good as you can get even now. It wasn't electric and didn't have the convenience. In fact, we have that old lantern; I'd like to fix it up and use it.

Well, any rate, those that used the tail end of the bricks, third and fourth grade bricks, were pretty badly disappointed. You can go down to the Legion Hall and you'll see that those brick are not first class, really. They're rotting out around the foundation.

MS: Where Percy Stewart lived?

DeMar: I don't remember a brick house down there, it was a log house. The one that Alf Billings lived in and it had been.... Percy lived in afterward. As far back as I can remember, Alf and Alice Billings live there and their family, Erma, Vella, Nona, Cecil and Everet. See that was that was occupied by George Billings prior to Alf Billings. There were those three Billings boys, George, Alf and Frank. George, I believe, was the first bishop of Jensen Ward. He was a very popular bishop after he was gone; a son-of-a-bitch while he was living.

At any rate, George lived down there and I believe he must have built that house. He moved out and Alf moved in and then he built a house down here in connection with the store and lived there till he left the country.

Well, that's just about all I know, because, see, that church house burned down in 1903 and I was born in 1901. I don't remember the fire. I can remember a little bit about the construction of the church and the making of the adobes and the firing of them. I remember the firing quite distinctly. They worked on it for more than a year. It was a big project. There was a lot of community work went into it.